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Summary record of the 20th meeting
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Chairman: Mr. Wenaweser ..... (Liechtenstein)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 43: Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/57/350)

Agenda item 105: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/57/41 and Corr.1, 295 and 402)

1. **Ms. Davtyan** (Armenia) said that children were at the heart of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. It was no coincidence that problems of development and children had been discussed together at the international conferences and events held in 2002; indeed, ensuring the rights and well-being of children was the key to sustainable development. Since the World Summit for Children in 1990, an international legal framework had been developed; infant mortality had been reduced, and vaccination campaigns had improved children's health. And yet, the lives and well-being of children were still under threat. Each year, 10 million children under the age of five died from preventable diseases, and hundreds of millions suffered from poverty, conflict and HIV/AIDS. The special session on children had led the international community to renew and reinforce its commitment to the cause of children by emphasizing quality education, the campaign against HIV/AIDS, and the protection of children against violence and exploitation. While it was the primary responsibility of Governments and society to ensure that children could grow up in good health, peace and dignity, only the concerted efforts of Governments, international institutions and non-governmental organizations could realize those objectives.

2. For Armenia, the previous decade had been a period of fundamental transition. The country had undergone a series of economic and political reforms and had reassessed its values, paving the way for democracy. In addition to the problems associated with a period of economic transition, common to all post-Soviet countries, the situation in Armenia had been further aggravated by a devastating earthquake, an inflow of refugees and an economic blockade. And yet, throughout that period, the State had accorded priority to the protection of children. As the Armenian Constitution proclaimed, the family, motherhood and children were placed under the care and protection of society and the State.

3. In close collaboration with international organizations, particularly the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as with international non-governmental organizations and donor countries, the Government had elaborated and implemented various programmes in the fields of health care, social security and education. In recent years, the infant mortality rate had declined by 25 per cent, and vaccination coverage had attained 95 per cent. The protection of the most vulnerable groups of children, including refugee and displaced children, and children from the earthquake zone, was an issue demanding special attention. There were currently more than 11,000 children living in temporary and makeshift houses, and the number of refugee children exceeded 65,000. Owing to the increasing economic and social disparities, which had been exacerbated by the continuing blockade, the number of street children and juvenile delinquents was growing. Current hardships also impaired the implementation of policies designed to address the problems of mentally and physically disabled children.

4. The Government was endeavouring to respond to the special needs of such children by promoting their integration, and planned to establish a social security system better adapted to their needs. Human rights education and public awareness campaigns also played an important role. Unfortunately, there were many obstacles, notably a lack of adequate financial resources. Nevertheless, in the spirit of the special session on children, and in accordance with the requirements of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the country had formulated a national action plan for children with six main objectives covering legislation, health, education, social security, cultural life and juvenile justice. In 2002, the tenth anniversary of the ratification of the Convention, Armenia had submitted its second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

5. **Mr. Choi** (Australia), referring to item 105, said that the outcome document of the special session on children, entitled "A world fit for children", drew the broad lines of international action in the coming years. Priority would be given to improving the situation of children with regard to health and education, ensuring their protection against abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS.

6. Australia would soon sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the

involvement of children in armed conflict. Adoption of the protocol was a step forward but it was also important that the standards that it set were backed up by effective measures on the ground.

7. His country had taken a practical approach that frequently relied on cooperation with UNICEF and other United Nations bodies and had taken a number of concrete measures with regard to children caught up in armed conflicts as child soldiers or refugees or who had been subject to the civil disorder and famine which often followed armed conflicts.

8. In recent years Australia had contributed funding to projects in countries such as Rwanda, Angola, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Sri Lanka. Those projects had mainly supported trauma-counselling services, centres for unaccompanied children, child soldier demobilization and reintegration programmes and community resettlement programmes. On 16 September 2002 the Minister for Foreign Affairs had announced that his country would provide a further $400,000 for the rehabilitation of child soldiers in Sri Lanka. A total package of $7.5 million would be divided among demining projects, food aid, rehabilitation and conflict reduction.

9. **Ms. Fusano** (Japan) said that her country had signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In collaboration with UNICEF and two international non-governmental organizations, her country had hosted the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (2001) that had resulted in the adoption of the Yokohama Global Commitment 2001.

10. At the national level, her country had adopted the Law for Punishing Acts related to Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Protecting Children in November 1999 as well as the Child Abuse Prevention Law, which had entered into force in November 2000. Moreover, in February 2001 it had formulated a national plan of action against the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The Japanese Government was also planning to hold an international symposium in Tokyo in February 2003 on trafficking in children.

11. As the Prime Minister had underlined at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, her country was convinced that the development of human resources, especially education, was fundamental to sustainable development and contributed to the peace and happiness of every child. Her country was therefore committed to providing more than 250 billion yen (approximately $2 billion) to educational projects in low-income countries over the coming five years. Those projects would concentrate on elementary education and promotion of the Basic Education for Growth Initiative. In March 2002, Japan had provided 60 per cent of the funding for the Back to School campaign conducted with success by UNICEF in Afghanistan. As the host country for the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, held in Tokyo in January 2002, her country would fully implement its commitments to support Afghan reconstruction and development.

12. As a follow-up to the Okinawa Infectious Diseases Initiative launched at the Group of Eight (G-8) Kyushu-Okinawa Summit meeting in summer 2000, the Government of Japan had strengthened its support for action against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, polio and other vaccine-preventable diseases and had implemented projects in a number of developing countries. Moreover, during 2000 Japan had provided approximately 200 billion yen (equivalent to some $1.6 billion) for improving access to water and sanitation systems. During spring 2002, it had assisted UNICEF in its implementation of projects related to water and sanitation in countries affected by protracted war and natural disasters such as the Sudan, Burundi, Angola, Uganda, Eritrea and Ethiopia.

13. **Mr. Osmane** (Algeria), speaking on item 105, said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child constituted a normative frame of reference in which to develop action strategies for children. He noted that, although progress had been made in recent years and interest in the rights of the child had increased, a number of objectives were far from being achieved as millions of children worldwide remained alone, without care and protection and exposed to all kinds of dangers and diseases as well as to poverty and armed conflicts.

14. Of all the children in the world, African children were most affected by malnutrition, pandemics, illiteracy, poverty and armed conflicts. That was the reason for the adoption by the African countries of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which, by virtue of its scope, could provide a new impetus for the elimination of the socio-economic causes of the sometimes tragic situation of African children. Africa needed the support

of the international community as it lacked the necessary financial resources.

15. The negative effects of globalization, the deterioration of terms of trade, the decline in official development assistance, the burden of debt and the weakness of foreign direct investment had an undeniable impact on the quality of life of third world populations and, in particular, children. The special session on children had emphasized the need to mobilize greater resources for them at the global level.

16. Since gaining its independence, Algeria had developed a legal, legislative and regulatory arsenal that took into account the higher interest of children, who made up more than half of its population. The programmes that had been implemented dealt with spheres as diverse as health, social protection, literacy and education. The government authorities supported the community movement and the various structures devoted to children, in particular those facing difficulties or those who had been abandoned, through social measures and subsidies.

17. In conclusion he recalled that, as the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF had stated in the General Assembly, children should be at the core of all endeavours to achieve development, growth, security, peace, human rights and social justice.

18. **Mr. Lee** Ho-jin (Republic of Korea) said that the traditional perception that problems relating to children were largely family matters had begun to change in his country with the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Subsequently, a plan for child protection and development had been adopted and the Prime Minister's Office made responsible for coordinating its application by the various government offices involved. In 2000, a revision of the Child Welfare Act had led to the establishment of child abuse prevention centres. In 2002, an extensive report on child abuse had been issued, also recommending preventive measures. Foster home support centres would be in operation in 2003 to assist children in the transition from orphanages to foster homes.

19. While his delegation believed that education was the key to the healthy growth and development of children, as emphasized in the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session, it recognized that chronic poverty was the greatest barrier to the protection and promotion of the rights of the child, including the right to education. The Republic of Korea was thus making an effort to alleviate poverty, a key Millennium development goal that had been reaffirmed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Yet overcoming poverty required concerted effort and investment on many fronts, as well as long-term strategies. The cost involved should not serve as an excuse for stinting on education. Education did not necessarily require a complex infrastructure. More important were creative thinking and motivation. Likewise, making children literate had many facets, and not the least was to instil in them a sense of freedom and responsibility, self-confidence and a vision for the future.

20. During the past half century, the Republic of Korea had experienced difficult times, but it had come through them thanks to its people's fervour for education.

21. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda) said that, as a follow-up to the special session on children, Uganda had set up a working group to reflect on the principles and components of the outcome document, "A world fit for children", and to prepare the second Uganda National Programme of Action for Children, focusing on the fields of education, health, nutrition, early childhood development, HIV/AIDS, prevention of the exploitation, abuse and neglect of children, advocacy and resource mobilization. Four pillars of child welfare policies had been singled out: survival, development, protection and participation. Wide-scale consultations were being held, involving representatives of the Government and of civil society. They were scheduled to continue until March 2003 and that the conclusions reached would be incorporated into the medium-term framework for the period 2003-2006 and taken into account in all the credit schemes aimed at reducing poverty.

22. Universal primary education was one of the goals of the Programme of Action for Children that had been successful. However, although children's well-being continued to improve, many of them were still living in difficult circumstances and to assist them was a priority for the Government.

23. Its main concern was still the plight of the children in northern Uganda exposed to the terror inflicted by the Lord's Resistance Army, which was responsible for continuing abductions and killings. The President of the Republic had relocated to northern

Uganda in order to be able to act more directly to help quell the situation.

24. The Government would be building primary schools for children rescued from the rebels. A number of organizations, including World Vision and Gulu Support the Children, were helping to rehabilitate the rescued children. UNICEF had also been instrumental in providing much-appreciated assistance. Some of those children had been forced to commit unspeakable crimes, many of them were returning home handicapped, unable to walk, talk, eat, sleep or even think. Some of them were finding that the rebels had burned down their homes and massacred their communities. Uganda was grateful for the support it had received from various bodies and the international community and urged them to continue to provide assistance.

25. **Mr. Ahluwalia** (India) observed that of the 1.8 billion children under 15 in the world, an estimated 600 million — or one third — lived in abject poverty. Very little could be achieved without addressing the underlying causes of their condition. Simply to focus on protecting the rights of the child was not enough; that approach must go hand in hand with proper attention to the developmental needs of children, namely, adequate and nutritious food, and to community services, basic health services and access to education. The need for such a strategy was evident from a reading of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report 2002*. It made clear that protection of the rights of children could not be expected when, in many countries, the overwhelming concern of day-to-day living was to manage to find food, and even to survive, in conditions of extreme poverty.

26. His delegation called upon UNICEF, UNDP and the other United Nations funds and programmes to try to get a better understanding of the many linkages among the various components of child development. With regard to children affected by armed conflict, the number of child soldiers worldwide was estimated to be 300,000. India was home to 308 million children, the largest child population in the world. Its Constitution pledged that the State would, in particular, follow a policy of ensuring that children were given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity, and that children and young people were protected against exploitation and moral and material abandonment. The National Policy for Children adopted in 1974 reaffirmed that commitment, and in 1992, the National Plan of Action for Children defined a set of quantifiable targets. The draft National Policy and Charter for Children 2001 provided, inter alia, that children had a right to be protected against economic exploitation, and that the State should move towards a total ban on all forms of child labour. Moreover, the Government was planning to set up a national commission for children.

27. His delegation fully endorsed the statement of the European Union that, however important the realization of the economic, social and cultural rights of children might be, poverty eradication must remain at the forefront of efforts on behalf of children.

28. **Mr. Palacio** (Ecuador) said that his Government attached particular importance to the protection of the rights of the child in the context of its policy on sustainable social development. In spite of the economic and financial crisis which had affected Ecuador, exacerbated by crippling external debt, the country had managed to increase its social budget to 25 per cent, an essential step for the implementation of child protection programmes. Similarly, within the framework of the Emergency Social Plan and the Medium-term Social Plan, the Government had launched specialized child protection programmes, including the introduction of school meals, maternal and child welfare, medical coverage for pregnant women, child-abuse monitoring and bilingual teaching. The majority of those programmes relied on community participation, which made it possible to strengthen social solidarity. In that connection, he mentioned the significant contributions made by the specialized agencies, particularly UNICEF and the World Food Programme.

29. Ecuador had also taken significant legal measures, such as the adoption of the National Convention on the Rights of Children and Young People and the drafting of the new Children's and Young People's Code, which was currently awaiting approval by the National Congress.

30. However, the most pressing question remained that of child labour, which occurred as a result of the severe poverty and marginalization inherent to most developing countries. Its existence reflected the inefficiency of a system based on intensive manufacturing and the export of raw materials with

little added value. To put a definitive end to child labour, productivity and wages must first be increased and, to that end, there must be investment in education, cutting-edge technologies and industries with significant added value which made use of the qualified workforce. In addition, the funds earmarked for reimbursement of the external debt should be used to repay the social debt. None of those actions could be contemplated without the assistance of the international community.

31. In spite of the difficulties facing it, Ecuador had made a commitment to fight against child labour by signing the various protocols on the eradication of that phenomenon. Since 1997, when the Inter-institutional Committee for the Eradication of Child Labour had been established, Ecuador had implemented a number of programmes in various sectors and, in that connection, he cited the agreement signed on 23 June 2002 at Guayaquil with banana growers and exporters with a view to preventing, within one year, young people under 15 years of age from working. In the area of education, scholarships had been awarded to facilitate the return to school of child workers, and social programmes in the area of job creation had been implemented which promoted, inter alia, community farming.

32. The situation of children of Ecuadorian migrant workers was also of concern. The mass exodus of a section of the population to other countries in search of work had left more than 150,000 children without parental protection. The Government had reacted by drawing up a national plan for emigrating workers designed to promote family reunification. It was also working for recognition of the rights of disabled persons and children. The award to Ecuador of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award had recognized its work with disabled persons but, above all, had served as a catalyst for greater awareness of the need to include all vulnerable groups under the umbrella of social action.

33. **Mr. Nsendula** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that he wished to associate himself with the statement made by the representative of Namibia on behalf of the Southern African Development Community. In spite of its extremely limited means, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was committed to respecting the plans of action and declarations drawn up at the recent international conferences. Children in his country were suffering on account of the war imposed by three neighbouring States, and he condemned the large-scale and serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law which had frequently occurred during the conflict, with tragic consequences: 3 million Congolese citizens had died, 2 million had been internally displaced and 360,000, mostly women and children, had been displaced to neighbouring countries; young women and girls had been kidnapped for sexual exploitation; child soldiers had been employed in the illegal exploitation of the country's natural resources, and rape and anti-personnel mines had been used as weapons of war.

34. Furthermore, the extreme poverty of the Congolese population meant that children had no access to basic social services. Child health, according to UNDP, was characterized by a high infant mortality rate (127 per 1,000 live births), a low overall vaccination rate and protein-energy malnutrition due to food insecurity. In addition, nearly 900,000 Congolese children under 15 years of age had been orphaned as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which had reached a prevalence rate of 15 per cent in the eastern and northern provinces as opposed to 5 per cent countrywide.

35. In addition to having ratified the main international and regional conventions on the rights of the child and international humanitarian law, acceding to the Ottawa Convention on Landmines and hosting, in November 2001, the Subregional Conference on the Protection of Women and Children in Armed Conflict in Central Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo had taken a number of measures to benefit children. In particular, it had set up a Youth Parliament, promulgated a decree-law concerning the demobilization and reintegration of vulnerable groups within the armed forces, including child soldiers, and established the National Office for Demobilization and Reintegration. Since the Democratic Republic of the Congo had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, it no longer enlisted children in the armed forces. A draft child protection code was awaiting parliamentary approval and efforts were being made to harmonize national legislation with the various international instruments. The National Children's Council, which was responsible for national policies and programmes relating to the protection and the promotion of the

rights of the child, was designing a national action plan based on the Declaration entitled "A world fit for children" adopted at the special session on children. The Government had also launched a national programme to combat HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections and had established a National Observatory for the Monitoring of Tourism-related Child Prostitution: all those initiatives required assistance from the international community.

36. **Mr. Schurti** (Liechtenstein) hailed 2002 as a good year for the protection and defence of the rights of the child, with the entry into force of two new legal instruments, the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both of which Liechtenstein had signed and was about to ratify. When it came to the application of the existing standards, however, the picture was not so bright, especially in the worst case, that of children affected by armed conflict.

37. Despite the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, much more needed to be done. His delegation supported the Special Representative's initiative on the formation of the forming a Youth-to-Youth Network announced in his report (A/57/402, para. 53).

38. Concerted national and international action was a prerequisite for success, as was dealing with the root causes of the repercussions of armed conflicts on children, their sexual exploitation, child labour and the special vulnerability of children to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, all of which required long-term strategies. Education, which was largely a national responsibility, was crucial, but the eradication of poverty worldwide would obviously play a decisive role in facilitating national policies. Taking care of children was not only a moral but a legal obligation.

39. **Ms. Pham Thi Kim Anh** (Viet Nam) said it was disappointing that, despite the clear commitment of the international community to making a better world for children, the rights of many children were not yet realized, and were even being violated in a number of regions, especially where countries were affected by war.

40. Viet Nam was the second country to have signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Domestically, the Government had organized the first National Conference on Children in December 1990, which had adopted a National Plan of Action on Children for the period 1990-2000, which asserted that the protection, care and education of children was the responsibility of every State, its entire society and each family. The second National Conference on Children held in January 2001 had concluded that most of the goals set in the national action programme had been reached: there had been a 30 per cent decrease in the under-five mortality rate and a 95 per cent vaccination coverage, polio had been eradicated and vitamin-A deficiency ended, primary education had been made available to all and illiteracy had been eliminated, among other achievements. Viet Nam had been lauded by the international community for its accomplishments.

41. The National Programme of Action for 2001-2010 had set new goals, such as the development of early childhood education, the improvement of the quality of primary and secondary education, the fight against HIV/AIDS and its prevention. Her Government had also acted to improve the situation of disabled children, of which there were over a million in the country, some of them victims of the Agent Orange sprayed during the Viet Nam war. It hoped to receive support and assistance from the international community in order to successfully implement its National Programme.

42. **Mr. Konfourou** (Mali) said that a meeting of experts had been held in his country in preparation for the extraordinary Summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), scheduled to be held in Dakar in November 2002, as a follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children.

43. Mali, which had co-hosted the 1990 World Summit for Children, had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, as well as other treaties relating to children. It was also a party to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and ILO Convention No. 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment.

44. Nationally, Mali had adopted a plan of action for the period 1992-2000 for the survival, development and protection of children, and had prepared and implemented a joint Government-civil society plan of action to ensure follow-up to international action taken on behalf of children. It was currently reviewing its

Penal Code and the provisions of the Labour Code relating to child labour and work done by women, and it had adopted a Family Code and a Child Protection Code. In addition, it had launched a public consciousness-raising campaign, was engaged in harmonizing its legislation with international treaties, was promoting the integration of children with special needs, was working to eliminate begging by children and transborder trafficking in children, and had drawn up a project to assist adolescents.

45. Mali had a fruitful partnership with the United Nations agencies, especially UNICEF, with which it had concluded a new cooperation programme for the period 2003-2007, aimed at consolidating the achievements of the earlier programmes, improving national indicators relating to the promotion and protection of children and women, favouring universal access to education, ensuring the protection of children, especially girls, against all forms of violence or exploitation, constructing a society respectful of the rights of children and women, making children and adolescents, especially girls, less vulnerable to HIV infection, and guaranteeing the rights of HIV-positive children or children with AIDS.

46. Having elaborated a plan of action to combat trafficking in children, Mali had signed a bilateral agreement on the matter with Côte d'Ivoire. Regionally and internationally, Mali had on 28 and 29 March 2002 hosted the first international meeting for the harmonization of national legislations prohibiting the exploitation of children in the francophone area and in other African countries. The meeting had produced guidelines to protect children against all forms of sexual and/or economic exploitation, mistreatment and/or violence, to ensure the education of children, and to regulate, labour by displaced or refugee children, and had concluded with a ministerial declaration. Earlier, in May 2001, Mali had organized a meeting of First Ladies of West and Central Africa on the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality.

47. Genuinely concerned over the problem of child soldiers, Mali had always advocated the elaboration of a more binding international instrument aimed at ending the enlistment of children or their use as instruments or victims of war.

48. **Ms. Ramiro Lopez** (Philippines) said that trafficking in children — a violation of human rights — was a complicated and multifaceted issue needing action at national, regional and international levels and an understanding of the dynamics involved.

49. At national level, the Government of the Philippines had taken concrete action by passing anti-trafficking laws to punish traffickers and to help and rehabilitate victims. The Senate had ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Twenty-four laws to improve protection of children had been passed, underpinning the 25-year Philippine National Strategic Plan for Children (Child 21). Better access to drinking water and sanitation in rural areas had contributed to reducing maternal and infant mortality. The partnership with civil society to help street children and other victims of exploitation had been reinforced. The Government had approved rules regarding children in the juvenile justice system.

50. At regional level, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) had adopted a Declaration on the Commitments for Children. In 2001, the Beijing Declaration on Commitments for Children for 2001-2010, covering East Asia and the Pacific, had been adopted. The tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, to be celebrated in 2004, would provide a reminder that the family was a structure vital to children's development.

51. To achieve a world fit for children, efforts should be made to eliminate poverty and concerted and sustained action should be taken at international, regional and national levels in partnership with civil society, but without politicization.

52. **Ms. Loguzzo** (Argentina) said that the rights of the child began at conception, and the basis for protecting those rights began with guaranteeing the right to life. The family, which served as the framework for a child's development, was founded on the union between man and woman. That institution should be protected by the State.

53. The State should also guarantee parents' right to a say in their children's education, including health education, especially reproductive health. The State and international bodies should support families, in a way that promoted all-encompassing education for children and teenagers. Applying the principle of gender equality would give boys and girls equal opportunities, in line with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

54. Argentina would assess the outcome of the Committee's discussions in the light of the position (including reservations) it had expressed in various forums regarding the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was committed to making a constructive contribution to the drafting of resolutions on that important issue.

55. **Mr. Ghimire** (Nepal) said that Nepal had adopted policy, organizational and procedural measures to give effect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a universally agreed set of standards and obligations. It had signed or become a party to 19 conventions and protocols relating to human rights, including the rights of the child, and had incorporated obligatory provisions into national law to protect the fundamental rights of the child. Nepal was adopting child-development policies as part of its Tenth Plan, and had set up a Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, a Human Rights Commission, a National Women's Commission and a juvenile bench. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Control) Act 1999 was being implemented, as was the mandatory education programme, with free schooling up to secondary level. Special schools had been set up to address the needs of disabled children, and immunization, polio and child health-care programmes had been launched with UNICEF assistance. Nepal's activities to improve the situation of its children were hampered by poverty and a seven-year battle against terrorism, however.

56. It had been gratifying to note that Nepal had been selected to implement a Time-Bound Programme to eliminate child labour, with the cooperation of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

57. Nepal had already submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and was engaged in preparing its second periodic report and end-of-decade report. It believed that social mobilization through the involvement of stakeholders and children themselves in the programmes and activities undertaken by the Government would produce the best results.

58. While progress had been made regarding infant mortality, diarrhoeal diseases, child immunization, polio eradication, literacy rates and prevention of iodine-deficiency disorders, much remained to be done, and Nepal was particularly concerned by the weak implementation of programmes and activities.

59. In January 2002, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had signed a Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia which would complement the efforts to be undertaken at national and global levels to achieve the goals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. SAARC and UNICEF had already signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation between them in that field.

60. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child provided the tools needed to improve the rights of children throughout the world. The special session of the General Assembly on children had ended with the adoption of a document entitled "A world fit for children" containing goals to give every child a decent life.

61. The situation of children in many parts of the world remained critical. The causes included poverty, illiteracy, natural disasters, HIV/AIDS and inadequate legal protection.

62. Bangladesh was a dedicated advocate of children's rights, and had signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. It had adopted a national plan of action whose aims included ensuring that children survived and were protected against killer diseases and improving maternal and child nutrition. The years 2001 to 2010 had been declared the decade of the rights of the child. Budget allocations for education and health care had increased substantially, providing a direct benefit for children.

63. The efforts of the State, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and development partners had combined to produce substantial progress in increasing school attendance, bringing down fertility and mortality rates, providing vitamin A supplementation, reducing malnutrition and tackling iodine-deficiency disorders.

64. Action had been taken to eliminate child labour in the garment industry, with the support of ILO and UNICEF. Action had also been taken to help abandoned and disabled children, and to end trafficking in persons, especially children.

65. There were a number of issues which should command international attention: the situation of children affected by armed conflict and the situation of

children under occupation (such as those in Palestine) and human trafficking (particularly trafficking in girls). The international community, especially the United Nations, must take tangible action to protect all such children.

66. **Ms. Molaroni** (San Marino) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the major instrument available to create laws, change attitudes and establish policies and programmes in the best interests of the child. San Marino had signed and ratified the Convention and had been one of the first to sign its Optional Protocols.

67. Implementation of the Convention depended on three main objectives: decent living standards and a safe environment, primary schooling for all and the involvement of young people in social matters. San Marino had acted in the legislative, social and cultural fields to promote those important principles.

68. Because of poverty, tradition, early pregnancy, distance from schools and HIV/AIDS, 130 million of the world's children had no access to education. Governments must be encouraged to commit themselves to the objectives established by the Secretary-General: actively mobilizing political leaders and the appropriate resources, eliminating gender differences and discrimination, educating girls living in crisis situations (during and after conflict) and combating violence against children in the family and at school. In that regard, her delegation commended the work of UNICEF to ensure quality in primary-school education and early-childhood development, expand immunization and combat HIV/AIDS, violence, exploitation and discrimination.

69. San Marino was concerned at the involvement of children in armed conflict, and had made voluntary contributions to many projects to protect children affected by war. More mainstreaming was needed in activities in those fields and the resources of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict should be better managed.

70. It was hardly imaginable that 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 in developing countries were working and that some 50 million were carrying out dangerous tasks. It was not enough to say that such children were helping their families by working. All children should be able to go to school and enjoy their childhood.

71. Many children had contracted HIV/AIDS. Industrialized countries and pharmaceutical companies should work to contain the pandemic and make treatment accessible to all.

72. In the field of international adoption, San Marino had taken steps to ensure that children coming from all over the world would be given proper homes and that the authorities of San Marino and of the child's country of origin closely coordinated the adoption process, keeping in mind the best interests of the child.

73. **Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) said that, despite the considerable improvements in the situation of children, particularly from the point of view of mortality, combating certain diseases and epidemics and increasing school attendance, what had been achieved still did not match what had been promised. Every year, 10 million children died from disease or malnutrition, over 100 million did not go to school and 150 million were malnourished. Children also continued to suffer the worst forms of exploitation and discrimination. They were forced into armed conflict and were increasingly falling victim to HIV/AIDS. The special session of the General Assembly on children had adopted a wide-ranging Declaration and Plan of Action whose implementation depended on national and international political will and the availability of the necessary human and material resources. The international community, particularly the developed countries, must help poor countries to fulfil their commitments and social-development goals. North-South cooperation must be strengthened, the pledged official development aid must be paid out to poor and least developed countries, the adverse effects of globalization must be mitigated, the debt burden must be reduced (particularly for African and least developed countries), developing countries' access to developed country markets for goods and services must be improved and the private sector must be brought into development projects (particularly those focused on children).

74. As part of its national and international commitments with respect to children, Morocco had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two Optional Protocols to the Convention as well as all the ILO conventions on child labour. It had also undertaken to bring its national legislation in line with the provisions of the Convention. Morocco accorded special importance to education and had enrolled all six-year-old children in school in 2002. It had also

established a children's parliament, which permitted children to express their concerns and opinions and to be involved in the development of plans and policies concerning them. Morocco had entered into a series of agreements with the various United Nations agencies and funds that dealt with children's issues, including UNICEF, with which it had entered into a cooperation agreement comprising four programmes on children's issues for the period 2002-2006. Concerning the situation of children in the world, Morocco deplored the situation of children in the occupied Palestinian Territories, which had been deteriorating for a year as a result of the policies of Israel, which denied children their basic rights, including the right to security and education. The international community must shoulder its responsibilities and force Israel to abide by the provisions of international law and respect the resolutions of the United Nations. The situation of Iraqi children, too, was extremely difficult as a result of the embargo, which had caused hundreds of deaths following shortages of medicines and food. There again, the international community must take action on behalf of those innocent children. It should also provide assistance to the countries seriously affected by the AIDS epidemic, including African countries, by providing them with material and technical assistance and giving them access to medicines at affordable prices.

75. **Ms. Boiko** (Ukraine) said that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the situation of children continued to give cause for concern, since many of them succumbed to diseases, including HIV/AIDS, did not have access to schooling or lived in extreme poverty.

76. At the special session of the General Assembly on children, the international community had made a commitment to protect the rights of children. While it might not be possible to evaluate the extent to which such commitment had been fulfilled, the Convention on the Rights of the Child had become almost universal, several countries had draw up programmes of action to implement it and children had become more involved in the protection of their rights.

77. In 2001, Ukraine had adopted a Law on the Protection of Childhood. It was also implementing a number of programmes aimed at ensuring the legal and social protection of children and creating conditions for their all round development. Moreover, the regulatory and legal framework had been improved, the presence of government structures involved in children's issues had been expanded and the number of state agencies responsible for the social rehabilitation of and psychological assistance to children had been increased. Thanks to the cooperation between governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, the region had been declared polio free.

78. However, Ukraine continued to be confronted with a number of difficulties. Many children classified as victims of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster needed special attention. Moreover, Ukraine had one of the fastest growing rates of HIV/AIDS in the world. As a result of the establishment of the "Prevention of HIV transmission from mother to child for the years 2001-2003" programme, hundreds of cases of HIV transmission had been prevented.

79. Her Government was grateful to the international community for the assistance that had been provided to it, especially its fruitful cooperation with UNICEF. In September 2002, Ukraine had submitted its second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, whose observations had been transmitted to the relevant government agencies.

80. The special session of the General Assembly had laid the foundations for a new programme for children. That opportunity should be seized to consider what steps could be taken to promote the rights of children, who were the future of humankind.

81. **Ms. Mi Nguyen** (Canada), speaking on agenda item 105 on behalf of her country and New Zealand, said that participants in the special session of the General Assembly on children had adopted a Plan of Action that would make a real difference in the lives of children in the fields of health, education, protection against exploitation and violence, as well as in the struggle against HIV/AIDS. The meaningful participation of children in that session had enriched the debates and improved the final outcome.

82. Determined to protect the rights of children, Canada and New Zealand strongly supported the efforts of UNICEF and other United Nations agencies. They supported the efforts of UNICEF to provide humanitarian assistance to children in complex emergencies and to implement disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for child soldiers. In that regard, she stressed the importance of

ensuring access to humanitarian assistance and the security of humanitarian personnel.

83. Canada and New Zealand welcomed the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to integrate the concerns of children in peace processes and to incorporate child-protection advisers in United Nations peacekeeping missions; to engage civil society, including NGOs, children and youth; and to improve monitoring and reporting on violations of children's rights in armed conflicts. They continued to encourage advocacy with regard to monitoring the implementation of commitments obtained by the Special Representative from parties to armed conflict. The Special Representative should coordinate his work with that of other special representatives and treaty bodies.

84. Canada and New Zealand had signed and ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and hoped to be in a position to ratify the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was another important international mechanism for the protection of children. All States should become parties to that Statute and, as soon as possible, to the two Optional Protocols.

85. Canada and New Zealand fully supported the active involvement of the Security Council in the protection of civilians, particularly children, in armed conflicts. They urged the Council to adopt a strong resolution in that area, based on the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

86. With regard to sexual exploitation, Canada and New Zealand had welcomed the opportunity to participate in the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in December 2001, and to exchange information with other Governments and civil society on progress achieved and lessons learned and to review ongoing challenges. The active involvement of children and youth had made a valuable contribution to the Congress.

87. The two countries expressed their appreciation for the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and its efforts to clear its backlog of reports. They hoped that other States parties would deposit their instruments of acceptance in support of the amendment to increase the membership of the Committee from 10 to 18.

88. They pledged to continue to work to implement the Convention in order to improve the lives of the world's children. A rights-based approach was the best way to ensure that children were adequately protected and able to enjoy their human rights.

89. **Ms. Lewis** (International Labour Organization) thanked Governments, employers' and workers' organizations and the non-governmental organization community for the efforts they had made during the preceding 12 months to fight against child labour. The Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the special session of the General Assembly on children would strengthen action in that field. She recalled that 130 countries had already ratified ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, making it the most rapidly ratified convention in ILO history. Since the beginning of 1999, an additional 40 countries had ratified ILO Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. Many other countries were well advanced in the ratification process, and if that momentum was maintained, universal ratification of both those fundamental instruments would be achieved shortly. In order to implement Convention No. 182, which targeted all persons under the age of 18, Governments must ban child slave labour and bondage, the exploitation of children by means of prostitution or pornography and their use in armed conflicts and in the manufacture and trafficking of drugs and all forms of hazardous work. That Convention, which called for the enactment and implementation of laws to that effect, as well as monitoring and reporting on progress made, provided a framework for global action and called for international cooperation and assistance.

90. ILO thanked its national partners for their strong support, and also extended its gratitude to United Nations agencies, particularly UNICEF, which was collaborating with it in its worldwide ratification campaign.

91. ILO was actively working with 75 developing countries, within the framework of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), with a view to reducing and eradicating child labour as quickly as possible. Initial pilot projects and

experiments had borne fruit and shown that broad-based in-country partnerships achieved the best results.

92. A number of countries had asked ILO for assistance in order to eliminate, within a defined period of time, all incidences of the worst forms of child labour. Such time-bound programmes were now taking off in a dozen countries.

93. ILO sought to link the issue of child labour with national development efforts by mainstreaming action to combat it in all economic and social policies and placing it in the context of poverty alleviation and the fight against parental unemployment and underemployment.

94. ILO was collaborating with other United Nations agencies and the World Bank in order to align data collection and analysis and research on child labour.

95. **Mr. Paclisanu** (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)), speaking on item 105, said that protecting children could not be separated from protecting families and communities, matters to which ICRC contributed by helping victims and promoting international humanitarian law. It focused on restoring the family links of children who had been separated from their relatives, treating injured children, visiting young people in prison and reminding the parties engaged in conflict of the protection which the law offered children.

96. For many years, ICRC had been helping the States parties to the Geneva conventions to fulfil their obligation to disseminate knowledge of humanitarian law among audiences including civil society. Against that background, national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies had drawn up communications programmes targeted at young people, tailored to local conditions and relying wherever possible on local intermediaries. Millions of schoolchildren across a range of countries had been taught about international humanitarian law and about the activities of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement. Following on from those efforts, ICRC had implemented the "Let's Explore Humanitarian Law" project in some 60 countries in 1998.

97. As demonstrated by the entry into force of the second Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the final outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly on children and the commitments made at the most recent international conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, States had the will to improve the situation of children, and they would have an opportunity to reaffirm that will at the 2003 conference. The Red Cross and Red Crescent movement was prepared to play an active part in ensuring that the commitments made had concrete results.

98. **Ms. Mint Mohamed Saleck** (Mauritania), speaking on item 105, said that her delegation was alarmed by the tragic and devastating effect which armed conflict, occupation, war and economic sanctions had on the world's children, particularly in Africa, Palestine and Iraq.

99. Mauritania had been one of the first States to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provided a fundamental legal framework for protecting and promoting the rights of the child, and it had conducted campaigns to alert public opinion and civil society to the importance of those issues.

100. In terms of institutional structures, the Office of the Secretary of State for Women's Affairs was responsible for formulating and implementing national policies for children and the family, and the Government had set up a national council for children, a parliamentary group for children's affairs and an association of mayors for the protection of children's rights. In terms of legal and judicial structures, the Labour Code had been revised to give children better protection, and Mauritania had ratified ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. It had also enacted a Personal Status Code which would improve family cohesion and the protection of children. A criminal code to cover minors was being drafted.

101. Because promoting human resources was central to the battle for development, the Government had been taking action in the fields of education and health. It had made basic education compulsory with an eye to achieving universal school attendance, and had established programmes to protect the health of mothers and children and prevent childhood diseases, which, coupled with nutrition programmes, had considerably reduced infant and maternal mortality.

102. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan) said that the rights contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child

fell into three basic categories: the right to an adequate standard of living, health care and education, the right to participate in activities, programmes and services for children, and the right to protection from discrimination, abuse, neglect and exploitation. It had been heartening to learn that 191 Member States had ratified the Convention, and that its two Optional Protocol had entered into force. The imminent agreement to amend article 43, paragraph 2, of the Convention to increase the membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child from 10 to 18 would greatly enhance the Committee's efficiency.

103. It was regrettable that millions of children were being subjected to the worst forms of exploitation by being forced into hazardous labour, drug trafficking, pornography and prostitution. While sex tourism flowed North to South, child trafficking flowed in the opposite direction. In many countries, children were direct participants in conflicts and wars, and the estimated number of child soldiers was 300,000. The problem of street children was growing constantly: there were currently over 100 million, and they suffered the cumulative effects of poverty, hunger, social isolation, violence and abuse. Like other children, however, they had the right to survive, develop and play a full part in social, cultural, educational and other activities. Because of its scale and complexity, and because it was rooted deep in socio-economic conditions, the issue could only be tackled by coordinated international action. The special session of the General Assembly on children had been a substantial step in the right direction.

104. Following the special session, Pakistan had organized a National Conference on Children attended by all stakeholders: the Government, civil society, international organizations, children and the media. Their views and recommendations were being incorporated into the National Plan of Action for Children. A National Child Commission had also been set up. It would bring together the federal and provincial governments, the corporate sector, civil society, media representatives and — most importantly — children themselves, to work together over the coming ten years. Four subcommittees had also been set up, and the structure would be replicated in the provinces. Pakistan believed that children's issues were issues of human rights and human development. Accordingly, the National Perspective Plan 2002-2012 concentrated on education, infant mortality, child labour and a review of legislation to ensure it was in line with the country's obligations.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.